

This week a Senate investigation concluded a process that began when an employee who worked for me 10 years ago alleged that I mistreated her. The report found that I violated our Senate policies. The allegations were that I “slammed doors, shouted in anger, and caused her to feel very uncomfortable.” It does not matter that I am passionate about the issues I work on. What matters is that I recognize the impacts of my actions. I have always tried to be respectful of the people around me when I advocate for important issues. I have not always succeeded. The report also says that I “rubbed” my colleague’s shoulders, offered her wine when she had to work late and made “flirtatious” comments. Did I treat her in a way that was different than others as a result of our previous relationship? Likely yes. But that does not make my actions acceptable. While in the position of power as a boss, one must consider the formality of the workplace; all employees should feel supported and successful in their job.

Finally, while some news reports said otherwise, the investigation found that I did not retaliate against her or the agency where she worked after leaving my office.

If we are ever going to create the society we dream of, one where each of us is truly treated equal, men in power must recognize our privilege and more importantly, the impacts of our actions... regardless of intent. We must own and understand the impacts of our behavior and the very real fact that our current system supports it. And, importantly, we must recognize that looking the other way for lesser actions creates a society that can be pathetically accepting of the worst offenders. Otherwise, there will be no real progress.

I remain proud to have been one of a few to vote for full transparency in the Senate and was one of the Senate leaders who pushed for the updated policies used in this investigation so that anyone, regardless of the accuser or the accused, can come forward safely to report mistreatment. What we did not anticipate in our efforts to create a fair, transparent process is the toll on all parties when a parallel, public process plays out in the media concurrent to investigation. In the end, this is why I felt the right choice was to step down and spare my family further negative impacts. We must have these discussions, as a society, if we are going to correct cultural inequities and assumptions that must be addressed. My hope, however, is that this first test of our procedures can help inform and improve how the Senate moves forward in the future.

I am eternally grateful for the incredible honor of having served as the Senator from this wonderful district these past years. I am indebted for all the support I have received over the last weeks. It means more than I can express. For now, I am going to take some time with my family and think about what is next for us. Whatever comes next, I know that I will remain a passionate champion for our progressive agenda, but with more awareness and mindfulness than I had before.